1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

which a figure, evidently of a Hindu god, has been carved, without doubt after the erection of the stone. Here we have a striking parallel case to the painted and carved menhir near Tregastel in Brittany, upon which has been carved the representation of a crucifix. There are also some carved stones near Nartiang (said to represent two women) called *mouthaudur briew*.

The Khasis say that these great stones were brought sometimes from considerable distances. After being hewn, the stones were laid on a large, wooden trolley and dragged across country by means of ropes of cane, of which plenty can be had from the *War* country on the southern side of the district, and then placed in position by means of ropes and levers. It seems little short of marvellous that these stones, which sometimes weighed many tons, were placed in position by such primitive means, especially when we consider the great trouble there was to re-erect one of the fallen stones at Stonehenge lately. Nowadays only comparatively small stones are erected, which are generally hewn and erected on the spot, so that there is no necessity for any conveyance.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the subject of the Khasi monoliths is in reality a large one, on which a great deal could be written, but owing to considerations of space it has been found necessary to compress the account within its present limits.

FESTIVITIES, DOMESTIC AND TRIBAL.

Dancing forms the principal part of all the Khasi festivities, and is an important adjunct of some of their religious ceremonies. One of the greatest festivals in the Khasi Hills is the Nongkrem dance; it may be said to be as important an event to the Khasis as the *Bih dieng-khlam* festivities are to the Synteng.

The Nongkrem dance is really part of what is known as the *pomblang* or goat-killing ceremony, performed by the Siem of Khyrim (or Nongkrem) with the aid of his *sad-lâei* (high priest) and the various *lyngdoh* (or priests) to Ka Blei Synshar (the ruling goddess), that the crops may prosper and that there may

triumphal procession with the slain beast through the home village. 224

A litter is prepared outside of the village of firm bamboo and decorated with palm leaves and other tree branches. In the middle of the litter a strong frame of bamboo is set up so that the spoil of the hunt (gazelle, antelope, bear, tiger, leopard, etc.) is placed on it belly down. The feet hang down stretched out. The head is held high by a forked branch, and a bunch of grass is placed in the animal's open mouth. The slain animal thus has an appearance of being alive. Arrow and bow are placed on the bier to the left and right of the animal. If the animal has been killed by a bullet, the Khasi carry the guns in their hands; if it was hit by an arrow, the first arrow which wounded it is placed in front on the bier before the animal. Then eight men lift the decorated bier with the slain animal on their shoulders and they all go towards the village with great ceremony. Blank shots announce the approach of the triumphal procession. The Khasi come from all sides. The hunters are congratulated, and all rejoice in the booty. Everybody watches the parade with pleasure. Some bring fresh rice brandy in bamboo pipes as thick as an arm; others bring betel nuts and water pipes. This as well as other refreshments are offered the hunters. The crowd surges around the bier, and after the slain animal has been thoroughly discussed, the procession begins. 224 224 483

The village boys run noisily ahead. Beaters and hunters follow. Then comes the bier carried by eight men. To the left and right go the women and girls of the village, swinging branches and bunches of leaves. Shouts of joy resound. Several hundred people

9: Godwin-Austen G-3 (no date) 1872 AR7 Khasi AR7

I never saw the Khasis engaged in raising a stone into the upright position, but I saw the spars which had formed a sort of cradle on which the stones forming the monument erected by the Nongtariang clan previously alluded to had been dragged from the spot where they had been quarried. They consisted of strong curved limbs of trees roughly smoothed and rounded, and would present a very small surface to friction. These stones had been taken from the side of a hill near, and had apparently been wedged out of the face of a step in the exposed sand-stone strata.

It may be as well that I should here give some account of the funeral rites of the Khasis, which will show there is no connection between them and the monuments I have been describing, and with which the other stone erections have no doubt been often confounded. In their funeral rites there is much that is wonderfully strange, and to those unacquainted with their superstitions, appears unmeaning. There can be no doubt but the Khasis have a very strong belief in a future state, and to say that they have no religion, as has been stated by some writers, is erroneous. True, they have no temples for either worship or idols, the religion of the people is principally a demon worship, and we find the Khasi ever in communion with or in the power, as he supposes, of the spirits of those who have gone before him. While, added to these spirits of their ancestors are numberless demons, male and female, ever ready, if not propitiated, to bring evil upon himself or his undertakings, and whose power even extends over the spirits of the dead. Every dark shady wood, every stream, every conspicuous hill has its presiding demon, which in many instances gives the name to the site. Thus, the hill of Lăkă, in North Jaintia, beyond Nongjinghi, is the abode of a one-legged demon, whom to see is death, but who was occasionally heard in the dense forest that clothed the northern steep face of the mountain, so said the credulous villagers of Nongtâng.

The dead are burnt on a funeral pyre, the logs of which are arranged very regularly, and the body lies in a sort of bed formed by them.

The calcined bones and ashes are collected and placed in an earthen vessel (small "ghara"), and are generally buried in some adjacent spot, a stone being placed over the vase for security; they do not, however, remain permanently in this place. Every family or clan has a separate receptacle for these remains, constructed in several ways, but always covered with a heavy slab of stone: these receptacles are called "Mao-bah," the great stone "Mao-shlieng," a bone depository—lit., the "bone stone."

M. Schlagintweit has fallen into an error regarding the dolmen-shaped structures, and was not aware that this form is so

10:Clarke U-3 (no date)1874 AR7 Khasi AR7

316 were all found within 200 yards of where they now stand, as may be inferred from the stray stone at about that distance from Stonehenge and not made use of: the small stones were probably brought a considerable distance from the greensand area in the north of the county.

316 483 8. In the setting up of these monuments the Khasis at the present day use only the simplest and most direct mechanical means. For transporting a big stone wooden rollers are placed beneath it and the stone is then drawn by a large number of men harnessed to it by rattan ropes. To set one of the slabs upright, one end is slipped into a hole dug 1-3 feet in the ground, while the other end is tugged by similar ropes. For putting one stone upon another, as in a horizontal slab monument, it is drawn up a sloping stage of bamboo, but if the slab be of great weight, a slope of earth must be constructed, up which it may be pulled. These are the present Khasi methods, and it is, of course, highly probable that similar resources were employed in ancient times. I add a more particular account of some of the larger monuments.

211 9. The monument on the Government main road, about six miles north of Cherra, not far from the village of Lirinow, stands on sheets of Cherra sandstone, out of which the slabs were cut. The tallest stones were about fifteen feet out of the ground. The five stones on the left-hand side (west) of the road were erected when I first visited the hills. The five stones on the right-hand side were erected about four years ago, the family to whom the monument belongs having determined on such an addition. The two portions form one indivisible monument, and exactly correspond, the stones being accurately worked and rounded. The two top-knots are seen in several other monuments, but must, I think, be held proved always of a very late date for their erection. At the Mawmai [531] monument a large rosette is carved on the face of the middle of the big central upright slab, which is also I presume modern work.

10. The monument at Mamloo village. This is, perhaps, the monument in all the hills which exhibits the largest slabs of Cherra sandstone. It stands on sheets of the same rock and there can be little doubt that the slabs were cut on the spot. It is of the (less usual) binary type.

11. The monuments at Rambrai in the west of Khasi-land. These consist of numerous horizontal and vertical slabs of no great size, the upright slabs being 4-8 feet out of the ground, but remarkable for their arrangement on a long open slope outside the village. The monuments stand all close together, collected as in a churchyard, so that it is not easy to expand-